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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001566

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DEPT PASS USTR FOR CUTLER/NEUFFER/BEEMAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEAN](#) [APEC](#) [ETRD](#) [CH](#) [IN](#) [RS](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: MOFA UPDATE ON EAST ASIA SUMMIT DEVELOPMENTS

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Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons:1.4(b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In comments to the Embassy on March 22, our MOFA contact on regional integration averred that efforts to create an East Asian community would move ahead, even if progress is slow and unsteady. He informally suggested that the United States might want to take advantage of Russia's efforts to become a member of the East Asian Summit (EAS) by telling ASEAN that the United States and Russia should be treated equally by both being made observers. Concerned that Russian participation in the EAS would redound in China's favor, Japan is seeking U.S. involvement in the EAS to counter Beijing's growing influence in Asia. End Summary.

#### Road Toward an East Asian community

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¶2. (C) On March 22, MOFA Asian Affairs Bureau Regional Policy Director Takio Yamada reviewed upcoming developments in Asian regional integration with Embassy Tokyo political officer. Looking beyond the second East Asia Summit scheduled for December, 2006, Yamada said a Joint Statement being prepared for the tenth anniversary of ASEAN Plus 3 would be a major declaration on East Asian regionalism. Intended to provide a road map for community building, the Joint Statement will be issued in Singapore in 2007 and is already under preparation. Yamada observed that while all of the goals of the Joint Statement may not be achieved, it should be watched carefully as it could greatly affect the future course of regional integration.

¶3. (C) Yamada noted that among the most immediate questions needing to be addressed by the community building effort are: 1) the relationship between ASEAN Plus 3 and the EAS; and 2) the relationship of the EAS to the United States. Yamada opined that the Philippines, as host of the second EAS to be held in Cebu in December, was unlikely to make progress on major issues, but growing regional interdependence would, nonetheless, push forward Asian integration. For that reason, he informally advised, the United States should consider how to deepen its involvement in the region and the EAS.

¶4. (C) Alluding to the contest between Japan and China as to which grouping would lead regional integration, Yamada asserted that the momentum toward building an East Asian

community would continue, whether the driving force was the EAS or ASEAN Plus 3. While the United States understandably emphasizes the importance of APEC, he said, U.S. participation in APEC alone is insufficient to deal with the sub-currents of regional integration. One way to increase U.S. engagement with Asia, Yamada suggested, was to become involved in the EAS. Reasoning that the United States was unlikely to agree to cabinet-level involvement in the EAS, Yamada thought that the United States might want to consider seeking participation in the EAS as an observer at the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)-level (Under Secretary).

#### Observerships For Russia and the U.S.?

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15. (C) Pointing to the upcoming ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) ministerial in July in Kuala Lumpur, Yamada said the annual ARF meeting might provide an opportunity for the United States to engage with the EAS. He explained that Russia has continued to press for membership in the EAS and that a decision might come as early as the July ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Although Japan did not favor Russian membership, he opined that ASEAN would likely approve Moscow's entreaties to join the organization. Noting that Indonesia President Yudhoyono would be visiting Moscow in June, he predicted that if Indonesia did not object to Russian membership in the EAS, it would be approved. Yamada expressed concern that an invitation to Russia to join the EAS while Secretary Rice was in Kuala Lumpur for the ARF ministerial would upstage the United States and tangentially embarrass Japan. Citing sensitivity on the part of some ASEAN countries to U.S. concerns, Yamada suggested that the United States could use this opportunity to press for observerships for both Russia and the United States on the basis of equal treatment.

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#### Objective is Countering China

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16. (C) Yamada readily acknowledged that Russian involvement in the EAS, if not balanced by U.S. participation, would be inimical to Japanese interests. While Russian influence in Southeast Asia is currently limited, Moscow is stepping up its regional activity. Russia has proposed to make last year's Russia-ASEAN summit an annual event and Moscow has increased its weapons sales in Asia, he noted. The danger to Japanese interests, Yamada said, is that Russian presence in the EAS may unwittingly help China fulfill its agenda for the region. Japan brought India into the EAS to counter China, but Russian participation in the EAS would mitigate India's ability to counter China. New Delhi's long-time relationship with Moscow would prevent India from standing up to China if Moscow joined with Beijing on EAS issues. Moreover, Russian involvement in the EAS would play to China's strategy of diluting the EAS, Yamada observed, making ASEAN Plus 3 (where the PRC has a relatively stronger voice) the more effective grouping for directing the East Asian community.

17. (C) Acting now while there is a temporary lull would enable the United States to gain a foothold in the EAS and to check Russian ambitions in Southeast Asia, Yamada continued. It would also enable the United States to build on the goodwill engendered by the 2005 U.S.-ASEAN summit. He averred that the growing self-awareness of Asian nations would ensure continued movement toward an East Asian community and that Japan and the United States needed to stay engaged with the region in order to protect their interests.

#### Comment

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18. (C) Ever since China first proposed the EAS, Japan has strongly desired U.S. participation in the EAS for two reasons: 1) to help Japan counter China's growing influence

in Southeast Asia, and 2) to keep Japan from having to choose between siding with its geographic neighbors or its security-treaty ally. The Japanese are convinced that the march toward an East Asian community will proceed, albeit slowly and fitfully. They cannot afford to be frozen out of Asia and so believe they must participate in the EAS. Japan is greatly concerned about perceived Chinese ambitions for regional domination, and Tokyo feels it cannot prevent Beijing from taking charge of the regional community-building process on its own. Although Japan succeeded in bringing India, Australia and New Zealand into the EAS, Japan will only feel confident that its interests are protected once the United States becomes a participant in the new grouping.

Bio Note

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19. (C) Yamada, who has been an excellent contact during the past several years while assigned to MOFA, will be transferred to New Delhi in April to head the Japanese embassy's political section. Yamada knows South Asia well from his recent stint as Director of the Asian Affairs Bureau's Southwest Asia Division.  
SCHIEFFER